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## THE MICHIGAN SYSTEM OF CHILD SAVING.

THE unique system of child saving in Michigan is a very interesting object lesson in sociology. By it this state has reversed for itself the condition, prevailing for centuries under older governments, by which crime and pauperism increased in greater ratio than the population. The higher civilization reached, the lower descended the classes out of which dependents and offenders were made. In earlier days civilization was threatened by barbarism from without, while in modern times the danger comes from barbarism within, from those elements of society which develop poverty, crime, riot and anarchy. The most profound study of the social scientist and statesman discovered no adequate remedy and society was alarmed. To imprison or execute the offender and to support the dependent was all that was conceived. Prevention in this field was as far in the future as preventive medicine. Reform had not been heard of. The Agricultural Colony for delinquent boys at Mettray, France, founded early in this century, is considered the parent of reform schools. For all time the prevailing agencies were:

### VINDICTIVE PUNISHMENT AND UNORGANIZED CHARITY.

For the criminals there were chains, hanging, beheading, torture, the dungeon, and all well-known crimes against criminals. The measures were severe enough, but they were not deterrent. It is a little over one hundred years since Howard revealed the wretched condition of English and continental prisons. And in that century reform has not been as rapid as we might expect from Howard's revelations. The very conception of prison reform was erroneous. Instead of commencing with the destitute and exposed child it waited until the child became a criminal. Then for young delinquents extensive institutions were erected

and crowded with those who might have been saved to good citizenship by preventive measures.

While crime was so treated, private charity, instigated by the highest motives, fed and clothed the wanderer, built asylums for children and the aged in some localities, while in others there was no helper. Here was a village home of many cottages for children, founded by some generous donor, while elsewhere there were destitution, wretchedness and exposure. Severity increased crime and overindulgent charity pauperized. While private charity was noble where extended, it was local and insufficient. A stronger power was needed that could reach all. Under the régime of severity and indiscriminate charity crime and pauperism increased in greater ratio than the population and there appeared no remedy. Among the methods tried was

#### THE COUNTY POORHOUSE.

It exists today in most states for adults and children. It is usually crowded and there is no separation of inmates. Associating in common are the insane, idiotic, diseased and depraved. In this corrupting atmosphere are many impressible children who are early influenced in ways that lead to poverty and crime. Children are placed there and born there. The district school, however near, is seldom open for them, and a school in the average poorhouse is an impossibility. An instance can be given where the united lives of three children of one family was twenty-nine years and they received no education. Under such conditions it cannot be expected that child dependence will decrease. It must increase in greater ratio than the population.

#### STATE AID TO PRIVATE CHARITIES.

A modern device is the support of dependent children in private or sectarian asylums mainly by appropriations from public funds. The constitutions of some states prohibits this union of public and private funds. The supreme court of Illinois has passed on this provision of the constitution of that state so that

such aid cannot be regularly extended to private or sectarian asylums. And yet the counties evade the constitutional provision and pay for boarding their dependent children in such institutions. In Michigan the constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the legislature to extend such aid. At first it seems a just arrangement for the state to aid such charities and that by it the state would have much less to pay. But experience has shown that the experiment has in the end proved very expensive to the state and injurious to the children. This system has wonderfully increased child dependence and involves enormous expenditures. In whatever form this is done, whether by state appropriations or by counties boarding out their dependents, in such asylums the same result will be reached. It is the "let alone" and the "riddance" method combined. The state or county official may think his duty done when the child has been taken from want and boarded out. But the child remains dependent still, with continued expense to the public and the expense will continue longer, for it is for the interest of the private charity to detain the child as long as the public pays. The church asylum was the first in the field for children, and only words of commendation should be given when the charity is unselfish. But when it becomes semi-public, depending on public funds, then it ceases to be a charity. It becomes a public institution conducted by private parties for their own interest and seldom controlled by law as to admissions or discharges of children.

New York has always been noted for its unlimited public and private charities. Nowhere has private and public aid been so lavishly extended to dependent children. Many noble men and women have been noted for their devotion to the work in this state. And yet the rising tide of child dependence has been more than public and private work could control under the system in vogue—that of support in private and sectarian asylums by public funds. As an example of this system the evolution of child saving in New York is interesting and profitable. The work began in alarm and for years has been continued in

despair. In 1868 there were 2257 children in the county poor-houses. In 1875 the "Children's Law" was enacted. By it children were excluded from the county poorhouses and were to be placed in sectarian or private asylums of the religion of the parents at the expense of the public. The law did not control the manner of admission nor the discharges from these asylums, and these institutions were soon overcrowded and new ones established. One sectarian institution has had, for many years, an average of about 3000 children on hand, the public paying about \$300,000 yearly for their support. For this asylum and in all others there was no judicial finding as to the child's dependence and each institution retained children as they willed. Under this régime child dependence rapidly increased. The average yearly increase of the population in New York the past ten years has been 38 per cent., while the increase of dependent and delinquent children has been 96 per cent. October 1, 1893, there were 29,909 dependent children in private and sectarian institutions, and there was paid that year, for their support, by the public, \$2,439,-216. These facts were so alarming that the recent constitutional convention considered seriously the question of prohibiting the extending of public aid to private and sectarian asylums. But the system was not directly disturbed. The provision was adopted by which the whole matter was put in the hands of the State Board of Charities. This board is authorized to establish regulations concerning admissions and discharges. This board will no doubt greatly better the condition and yet will deal with these institutions with the liberal spirit which has so long accompanied child saving in New York.

California is another striking example. In 1890 the population of this state was 1,208,130. December 31, 1895 there were in private and sectarian asylums in that state and in a few county hospitals 5409 dependent children, and for the year ending then there had been paid by the public for their support \$312,217.11. These figures are official and recently from the comptroller of the state. Serious efforts have been made to better this condition but so far with little encouragement. The influences of the asy-

lums of New York and California would be against any measure that would deprive them of these receipts and hence the great difficulty that arises when improvement is sought. The state that is dominated by a combination of political and sectarian interests may have to struggle long before relief, if ever, is found. Any state pursuing the same course will in time find itself in the same condition, the institutions resting with heavy weight on the public as the mountain on Enceladus :

The crags are piled on his breast,  
The earth is heaped on his head.

Ohio has a district system under which counties may unite and establish a children's home. There are forty-five such homes, and in August last there were about 3600 children in them. The expense in 1894 for their support was \$242,554.09. These homes are often pleasant and attractive. A large number are placed in families each year, and the people seem pleased with the system. There must be a great diversity of management, and whether so expensive a system will prove the better time must develop.

The Pennsylvania system is somewhat like that in New York. The Children's Aid Society does excellent work in placing children, and its methods, if extended, would no doubt be of great benefit. Massachusetts after trying various methods has placed all dependent children under the control of the State Board of Lunacy and Charity, which boards out the children, places them in families and supervises them by paid visitors. There is a radical difference of opinion in Massachusetts as to its system. The present condition there is somewhat formative and experimental. These states are cited because so much is done in them by public officials and private citizens to improve the condition of dependent and delinquent children, while in most of the states there is great indifference and neglect with county poor-house support and associations. The following table is referred to as showing the results of different systems :

A COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER OF DEPENDENT AND DELINQUENT CHILDREN SUPPORTED AS PUBLIC CHARGES IN THE CITIES AND STATES NAMED BELOW.

CITIES	Population	Number Supported	Expenses	Proportion to the Population
New York .....	<sup>1892</sup> 1,801,789	<sup>1894</sup> 15,331	\$1,683,847	1 to 117
London.....	<sup>1891</sup> 4,211,743	<sup>1894</sup> 20,426		1 “ 206
Boston .....	<sup>1890</sup> 448,477	<sup>1894</sup> 536		1 “ 856
Philadelphia.....	<sup>1890</sup> 1,046,964	<sup>1894</sup> 529		1 “ 1979
STATES		Dependent Children Only		
New York .....	<sup>1890</sup> 5,997,853	<sup>1893</sup> 29,909	2,439,216	1 “ 200
California.....	<sup>1890</sup> 1,208,130	<sup>1895</sup> 5,409		1 “ 223
Ohio .....	<sup>1890</sup> 3,672,316	<sup>1895</sup> 3,600	242,554	1 “ 1000
Massachusetts .....	<sup>1890</sup> 2,238,943	<sup>1895</sup> 1,311		1 “ 1707
Pennsylvania .....	<sup>1890</sup> 5,258,014	<sup>1892</sup> 8,584	1,505,107	1 “ 747

The expenditure in Pennsylvania was partly by the public and partly by private charity.

THE MICHIGAN SYSTEM.

There are several leading agencies in Michigan which contribute to child saving. The system is not a perfected ideal, but it embraces much of such a system, with a tendency to farther improvement.

The principal features are :

1. The State Public School for Dependent Children at Cold-water.
2. The Industrial School for Boys at Lansing and the Industrial Home for Girls in Adrian.
3. The State Board of Corrections and Charities and its County Agency.
4. The Public School System and Compulsory Education, Factory Regulation and Inspection regarding minors, medical and surgical treatment of dependent children at the University Hospital and laws for the protection of children.

The Lansing School was established early in the history of the state, the State Public School in 1871 and opened in 1874 and the Adrian Home some few years after. The Board of Corrections and Charities was provided for in 1871 and its County Agency in 1873.

The State Public School has been on trial nearly twenty-two years and can now demonstrate the value of its work for the dependent children of the state. It has more than realized the highest expectations of its friends. It is a state institution, entirely supported and conducted by the state, the expenses being paid with biennial appropriations. Its basic principle is the support and education of all the dependent children of the state of sound mind and body under twelve years of age in a temporary educational home, from whence they are to be placed in approved families as soon as practicable on indenture or by adoption. It has no connection with the penal system of the state and is a part of the educational system, making its reports to the Superintendent of Public Instruction. No taint of crime attaches to any child by reason of its admission. No child is admitted because it has become delinquent. Poverty is the only cause. Michigan radically separates the dependents from the delinquents. It is the first government that ever undertook such a work, and the trial was looked upon with interest in and out of the state, and by some almost with alarm, who feared the expense would be greater than the results would warrant. But it was intended to be helpful to the state as well as to the children and so it has proved.

While admissions to private and sectarian asylums are usually informal, often by direction, by parents or by town or city officers without form of law, no child is admitted to this state school except on evidence in probate court and on order from the judge after full opportunity has been given the parents or friends of the child to be heard. There is thus a public record of the dependence of the child and a history of where the child comes from and where it has gone to. Even a destitute child has rights and these rights and the rights of its par-



ents are respected. The ease of admission and withdrawal of private charity inmates often induces parents to have their children supported in them for a time. But admission to the State Public School forfeits all parental rights. The parents knowing this make a more serious effort to keep their children and often succeed. This is one important cause of decrease of child dependence. In all cases where parents become able to support their children, and the instances are very few, an effort is made to arrange for the restoration of the child, and this is done at times by consent of the foster parents if the child is on indenture.

The county superintendents of the poor are required to bring all admissible children before the judge of probate to determine their dependence. Notice is served on the parents if they can be found and the case is regularly tried. After admission the children are taught the branches usually taught in the public schools, by the best primary and kindergarten teachers that can be procured. The institution is on the cottage plan, the children living in cottages—about twenty-five in each, supervised by a lady cottage manager, acting in the capacity of mother. The children live and sleep in the cottages, attend school in the schoolhouse, eat in the large general dining room and work in and out of the buildings as their age or ability warrants. They remain in this temporary home on the average less than a year. Some of the younger well fitted for it go almost immediately into homes, while many others need much done for them mentally, morally and physically before going into a respectable home. The indenture provides for good treatment as a member of the family, for their attending the public schools and their being taught some useful occupation or trade. A clause in the contract authorizes the board to cancel it if deemed for the best interest of the child. When adopted in the probate court, the child becomes the heir of the foster parents.

The institution is in charge of a board of control of three members, while the more direct management is by the superintendent who resides at the school. The school has a state

agent whose duties lie almost entirely outside in visiting the children in families and in finding homes. If he learns that a child is ill treated, he is to remove it and place it in another family or return it to the school. His position requires great zeal, good judgment and delicacy of treatment. His work has very much to do with the success of the school. He visits and reports on all the children once each year, the county agent once, and the foster parents once, such reports as near as may be coming about four months apart. Some cases need more attention and have it from both the state and county agents. Some of the best children in most excellent families need much less supervision. In this way during the minority of the children their interests are watchfully guarded, and whether in families or in the school, in health and in sickness, they have most kind attention. Many never knew kind treatment until they entered the school, and no private charity ever cared for children better than the state has done.

The institution provides for all the admissible dependent children of the state not cared for by private charities. The state in no way restricts the private institutions. There are several laws under which they may be organized and some operate without incorporation. The law does not regulate the manner of admission or discharge. These laws were enacted mainly before the State Public School was established and have been amended from time to time. There never has been any collision between the state and these institutions, the former apparently yielding to private charity all it desired to do. The state school not being sectarian does not seek to place children in families of the religion of the parents but welcomes aid from the churches that desire to do so.

For twenty-two years Michigan, with humane ideas for the children and with thoughts of self-preservation for itself, has been as a parent to these children of the poor. As the lamented Governor Bagley once said in an address:

The most beneficent and grandest work the state has ever done is the state public school at Coldwater. There we have little chil-

dren who have no home save what the state provides for them whose hearts are as pure and whose minds are as capable as those whose lot is a far different one. The children are surrounded with everything pertaining to a home save parental love, and we are teaching them to grow up to be true men and women and good and profitable citizens. From this school children have been adopted into the homes of good farmers, merchants, mechanics, lawyers and ministers of the country around. I do not mean apprenticed or bound out like workhouse children, but adopted into good homes with all their happy surroundings. What a noble work for the state to engage in, reaching out a hand not heavy and restraining, clothed in iron mail, but gentle, and with a tender clasp, folding in its arms these innocents, taking the place of their fathers and mothers and holding them out to its citizens as their brothers and sisters.

And now what has been the result of this work? When the school opened in 1874 there were 600 children in the county poorhouses and the number was increasing. The population of the state was then 1,334,403 and had probably increased to 1,500,000 in 1874. There would be then one dependent child to each 2500 of the population. The census of 1890 showed a population of 2,093,889. At this time the number of dependent children in the state had been reduced to about 250. In February of this year the number did not exceed 200, including 155 in the school and not over 50 below two years of age in the county poorhouses, if any. On the basis of the census of 1890 there is now only one dependent child in the state of sound mind and body under twelve years of age to each 10,468 of the population. The increase of population since 1890 would probably bring this ratio to 1 to each 12,000. In the twenty-two years child dependence has decreased in Michigan over 65 per cent., while the population has increased over 70 per cent. If the increase of child dependence had been at the same ratio as that of the population there would have been in 1890 one dependent child to each 2,500 of the population or 833 for the public to support and about 900 at this time. It formerly cost the counties \$75 to \$100 each to support these children in the poorhouses and at the lower rate it would now cost annually \$65,000, and they

would have only had poorhouse support with no education. With these influences, had the old system prevailed, exposing children to crime and pauperism, there would no doubt have been 1000 children to support now at a cost of at least \$75,000 per year, and then it would not have been one-fifth the cost it is in California which has only half the population of Michigan and has twenty-five dependent children to one in Michigan. The annual cost of the Michigan school including the county and state agencies, is less than \$40,000 per year. The saving to the state considering only the economy, is very great each year. But the greater saving can never be shown. It is the saving of the children. Their loss can never be estimated. As Pericles said, "The loss which the commonwealth suffers by the destruction of its youth is like the loss which the year suffers by the destruction of Spring."

Some other system may accomplish as much, but that system has not yet been discovered. Since the world began no other government has made such a showing. At this date the school has received nearly 4000 children. These have been indentured or adopted; many have become self-supporting with homes and families of their own. Many have been restored to their parents and all have averaged about as well as the children attending the public schools.

The state board of Corrections and Charities and the county agents of the board materially aid in child saving. This board is a necessary feature in any well-organized penal and charitable system. If, in some states, the value of such board is not highly appreciated, it must arise from indifferent appointments to the board. It needs to be made up from capable, practicable, humane and business-like men, and above all the board should be non-political. Such a board is invaluable. The Michigan board supervises and reports on all state and county penal and charitable institutions, and submits its opinion to the governor on proposed appropriations. Its child-saving work is principally done through its county agents. These are appointed by the governor, one in each county. Their duties relate to both dependent

and delinquent children. When complaint is entered against any boy under sixteen years or any girl under seventeen years for any offense not punishable by imprisonment for life, the court is required to notify the county agent, who attends the court and advises the judge as to the disposition to be made of the child, after learning the facts. This consultation, in the interest of the child, often leads, especially in case of first offenses, to their return to their parents on discharge or suspension of sentence. If the opinion is that the child needs reformatory treatment, it is sent to one of the reform schools.

The agents inspect and report on all proposed homes for dependent or delinquent children, and none of either class are placed in families by indenture or adoption, unless the agent approves. And when he finds after indenture that the home is not adapted to the child or that the child is ill-treated, it is his duty to report the case, at any time, to the school which placed the child. The county agency is very necessary to a well-ordered system. The applicant for the child lives in the county of the agent. He can readily learn whether the home is suitable, and when the child is placed he soon hears if it is not well treated. He is where he can see and learn all and protect the child and guard its every interest. The agency is not expensive. For all their labor for boys and girls of both classes, they have only \$100 per annum each and expenses, except that in the larger cities they receive \$200 annually. It is largely a labor of love and self sacrifice when the duties are well discharged.

The Michigan laws for the protection of children assist very much the work of child saving. For ill-treatment parental rights may be forfeited and the child sent to the state school. Children under sixteen years of age are excluded from drinking saloons and gambling houses. They must not be employed as acrobats or in any occupation dangerous to health or limbs. They must not be put in jail in apartments with adults. They must not be kept in the county poorhouses. The same law requires all persons or societies, non-resident and resident, placing children in families, to have the home approved by the county

agents, and a bond of \$1000 is required from non-residents that the child shall not become a public charge. This last-named provision prevents the importation of children and was so intended. It does not prohibit. It regulates only, requiring others to simply use the same precautions that the state does in placing children.

A Michigan law provides for the free surgical and medical treatment, board and nursing of dependent children at the Michigan University hospital. This treatment enables the child to become self-supporting who, without it, might be a life long dependent. Compulsory education may be considered one of the important child-saving agencies. The law is recent and scarcely yet in operation. Reports from fifty-two cities show an increased attendance of about 3000 and that it would have been larger had there been room. Returns from twenty-eight counties, outside of the cities showed an increase of about 1200. Many reported a marked increase without stating the number. The probable increase in the state is over 5000 and possibly much larger. Some parents have been arrested and fined for not sending their children to school and with good results. The public school system generally, which furnishes free education to all, should be credited with child saving.

The reform schools are among the best organized and conducted and have done excellent work in the reform of delinquent children. The average number in these institutions the past five years, does not show increase in numbers. It has been as follows:

	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894
In the Adrian Home for girls	233	233	212	224	234
In the Lansing school for girls	480	503	497	415	453

The Michigan laws regarding child labor in factories, prohibits the employment of children under fourteen years of age and none between the age of fourteen and sixteen years without the consent of parent or guardian.

The state public school feature of child saving has been adopted by Minnesota, Wisconsin and Rhode Island and sub-

stantially by Colorado and New Hampshire. Serious efforts have been made to adopt it in some other states, but without success, as interested parties worked against it.

The first great advantage of the Michigan system is the fact that one authority, and that the highest, the state itself, has taken the responsibility and charge of all dependent children. The state is more interested than any individual or society can be in all its minors and, having the power and authority, can best become the guidance of its dependents.

After twenty-two years' successful experience in child saving the Michigan object lesson teaches that any state may adopt the system, sometimes modified to conform to local conditions. And these points may well be favorably considered in its adoption :

1. That a non-political board of three or five persons should be made the guardian of the persons of all dependent children of the state, not including those in private institutions.

2. This board should have authority to place these children by indenture or adoption in families, and to accomplish this there should be a temporary educational home in which to fit children for homes, but no large institution should be established. The main work should be done outside.

3. No child should be placed in a private or public institution, except by order of the court after regular hearing of the case.

4. There should be official inspection of all public and private institutions for children with annual reports to the governor. All private or sectarian asylums for children should be incorporated and should make yearly reports to the governor and required to place children in family homes approved by a state board.

5. There should be full encouragement to private or sectarian charities, but their rights and duties should be clearly defined by law and always in the interest of the children. Public aid to them should never be extended. Public support should always be entirely public, and private charity should always be private charity alone.

But whatever system may be adopted the most vital principle is that the state should assume the responsibility and direction of all public and private charities for children; to the end that the state should secure to these, its future citizens, education, character and self-support, the essentials of all strong commonwealths.

C. D. RANDALL.

COLDWATER, MICHIGAN.